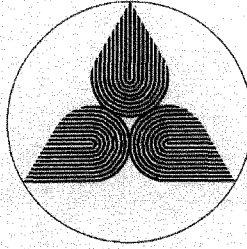


SUBMISSION NO. 19



The Secretary
Environment and Heritage Committee
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

email Environment.Reps@aph.gov.au

Secretary: *Frank Pearce*

RECEIVED

29 OCT 2003

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON
ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

ENQUIRY INTO SUSTAINABLE CITIES 2025

RESPONSE FROM THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

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AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS
ACN No. 008 531 851

ENQUIRY INTO SUSTAINABLE CITIES 2025

RESPONSE FROM THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage: SUSTAINABLE CITIES 2025.

Firstly, we would like to congratulate the government on the initiative they have undertaken to address urban development.

Current models of urban development are recognised by many in the community as a threat to the environment, social and economical viability of our urban areas.

It is timely that we rethink how we are to develop cities over the next 20 years.

SUMMARY

Landscape Architects are and will increasingly become critical players in the development of sustainable cities. As designers, we are involved in the planning, design and construction of places for people throughout the urban environment – public/private, internal/external, large/small, natural/man-made. We bring together training and experience in a design profession with strong roots in both the sciences and arts.

This creative synthesis adds value over and above the basic human requirements of water, food and shelter.

A sustainable city is a healthy city. A healthy city will be measured by the health of the community and the health of the environment that supports it.

Sustainable cities will be as much about building communities as it will be about steel, glass, bricks and transport systems. The work of Landscape Architects provides the stage by which individuals develop a sense of worth, identity and belonging in their community. This may be at a neighbourhood, local Council area, region and/or trans-city level.

It is essential that existing and new urban developments include well planned, designed and constructed spaces throughout the urban area.

These spaces need to be of varying sizes, provide for a broad range of social and community needs and be inspirational 'living' spaces for all members of the community.

ENQUIRY INTO SUSTAINABLE CITIES 2025

RESPONSE FROM THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

It is also essential that the cities of this millennium give full consideration to the health of the environment.

A healthy environment that includes effective water management, clean air and biological diversity will also be the basis for a healthy population. Protection, reinforcement and rehabilitation of the natural systems will be integral to a healthy environment.

At the same time, newly constructed places will need to incorporate best practice environmental design that will further support the natural systems.

Environment and community are the two areas to which landscape architects will contribute and it should be a major focus of government policy. Full consideration of these aspects of the new city would suggest that the time has come to develop urban areas whereby the landscape and the community spaces within provides the framework around which building patterns and transport systems must fit.

This model will provide the basis for sustainable healthy cities.

BUILDING COMMUNITIES

Sustainable cities must be liveable cities, and to do this they must support and promote strong, healthy communities.

Liveable cities will provide equitable access to all the services that cities typically provide. Water, food, shelter and employment are the basics.

However, to build healthy communities, cities must also provide for the social and psychological needs of the population. Very often these needs are met by the public spaces where people meet, relax and interact. It is these spaces that are critical to the health of a community.

Not only must they be well planned within the urban framework, they must be skilfully designed to respond to the many demands placed on them.

ENQUIRY INTO SUSTAINABLE CITIES 2025

RESPONSE FROM THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

Landscape architects are the profession that brings together a strong grounding in the sciences and arts to create usable, inspirational places for people.

When planning, designing and implementing 'places for people', landscape architects will consider the following needs of a healthy community:

- Social cohesiveness that supports the community while recognising and celebrating individual differences
- Engender a feeling of belonging and involvement in the city and its activities
- Facilities and spaces that promote social interaction, play and contemplation
- Urban patterns that allow for diversity and inspire innovation and participation

Planning and design of urban areas should focus on improved outcomes for the **places for people**.

The location, size, function and connectivity of these places need to be well planned. They must also be creatively designed to provide inspiration. They will be attractive, appealing places that deliver flexible spaces that are highly valued by the community.

Open space, parkland, meeting areas, sport and recreation facilities, natural bushland, waterways – these should form the framework around which building patterns and transport systems can fit. This is further emphasised when consideration is also given to the natural systems that will support our cities.

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A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

A healthy environment is one in which:

- natural systems – energy, water and air – are in balance and are self sustaining
- biological diversity is protected
- the environment is able to restore and mend itself
- the health of the urban population is not compromised by poorly functioning natural systems

Clearly, in most developed urban areas this is not the case.

By their nature, urban areas lead to a deterioration in the health of the immediate environment. The impacts are not only restricted to the immediate environment. Cities are major importers of energy, water and natural resources while contributing little to improved environmental health.

While it is not reasonable to expect full environmental health, there is significant room for improvement.

Firstly, a functioning water system should be restored. In the urban setting, such a system will not be natural. It therefore should focus on the improved outcomes:

- maximum infiltration of water into the soil and protection of natural flows
- minimal need for water importation from external sources (dams and bores outside city)
- optimum health of all receiving waters
- utilisation of systems for capture, consumption, treatment and re-use of water that have minimal adverse impacts on the environment

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Secondly, a healthy air environment should be a primary focus for future urban development. Again, the focus will be on improved outcomes:

- reduction in greenhouse gas production (this clearly also has implications for reduced energy consumption)
- cleaner air with reduced polluting gases, aerosols and particulates

Biological diversity and an environment that is able to restore and mend itself, relies on a diversity of open space. The open space network will:

- include protected natural areas, remnant and rehabilitated natural areas, developed open spaces
- provide excellent links between open space areas and have a high degree of biological connectivity
- be closely co-ordinated with the built form and transport networks to minimise or remove adverse impacts

Landscape and environmental determinants will shape how we deal with urban areas to ensure a healthy environment.

It must be integral to the initial planning and carry through the design to final construction and management.

Again, a model whereby the landscape provides the framework around which building patterns and transport systems are developed may provide the best outcomes.